

108 Clay-Dickinson ask to be among Iowa's first "Great Places"

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It takes only a weekend in the Iowa Great Lakes corridor for most people to realize Clay and Dickinson County are among Iowa's Great places. It may take a lifetime to uncover all the area's treasures.

On Thursday, members of a new group called "Waters and Prairies of Clay and Dickinson Counties" had one hour to convince two judges that the corridor should be among three pilot "Great Places" in Iowa.

Amanda Styron and Bill Menner, members of the

state's Citizen's Advisory Committee, visited the Lakes Art Center on Sept. 22 to watch a presentation on "The Great Waters and Great Prairies

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Artwork by Bogenrief Studios in Spencer was displayed with native prairie plants at the front of the Lauridsen Performing Arts Center in the Lakes Art Center in Okoboji. The display helped judges visualize some of the treasures of the region.

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INFORMATION

Seven dimensions of Clay and Dickinson Counties

- Unique sense of place
- Engaging experiences
- Rich social fabric
- Vital economy
- Pleasing environment
- Strong foundation
- Creative culture

Short term goals of the "Waters and Prairies" committee include:

- Creating a Discovery Series tour book for the region and arrange distribution
- Creating a website

- Holding an artists' tour showcasing artists of Clay and Dickinson counties
- Forming a speakers bureau to promote the region

Long term goals of the "Waters and Prairies" committee include:

- Continuing collaboration efforts between Clay and Dickinson counties
- Putting together a Discovery Driving Tour on CD
- Creating a corridor of public art
- Formulating a plan and choose a site for a stained glass museum



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of Clay and Dickinson counties."

Local residents from the two counties teamed up to apply to become one of three pilot "Great Places" to be announced next month in Iowa City.

"Our great place is truly unique," said Herman Richter, University of Okoboji founder and area enthusiast. Richter was the emcee for the one hour presentation.

"We feel there are seven dimensions that have really worked together to make this area such a great place," Richter said. The seven dimensions of this "great place" include the unique sense of place, engaging experiences, the rich social fabric, the vital economy, pleasing environment, strong foundation, and creative culture.

Each presenter touched on one of the seven dimensions.

Jim Schooley of Spencer explained the area's sense of place. Deidre Rosenboom of Spirit Lake walked the judges through engaging experiences during a summer day in Arnolds Park. Martin Arthur of Spencer talked about the rich social fabric of the area.

"Residents of Clay and Dickinson counties have taken the initiative to make this a better place to live," said Arthur. "The people are the fuel that move this area forward."

Ann Ditsworth of the University of Okoboji

Foundation talked about the growing economy.

"We urge people to live, work and play the Iowa Great Lakes way," said Ditsworth. "In the last seven years, 1,300 jobs were created in new and existing industries. Tourism is also a million dollar industry each year."

Steve Anderson told judges about the pleasing environment of the area, and Abbey Larson of Okoboji Tourism talked about the importance of having a solid foundation.

Sheryl Hall of Spirit Lake spoke of the area's sense of the corridor.

"Creative ideas are celebrated in our great place,"

said Hall. "Our area invites us to dream."

Following the discussion of the seven dimensions, Curtis Dean and John Goede of Spencer presented a dream to those in attendance.

"We have many treasures in our backyards," said Dean. The two leaders presented the idea of creating area treasure maps to guide residents and visitors through the area's natural, historical, and economical treasures. The treasure maps will start off as simple brochures, then may grow into more detailed books and driving CD tours.

Dean and Goede concluded their presentation with a musical rap presentation promoting another goal for the group - a website.

The presentation also included a brief speech from stained glass artist Jeanne Bogenreif of Spencer.

Bogenreif explained that not long ago, her business was being highly recruited throughout the nation. She says the area's artists, business community and public have been great for the business.

"We wanted to make our studio a point of destination," said Bogenreif. "In less than a year, we've seen so much movement here."

All presenters urged the judges to consider making Clay and Dickinson County among the three pilot "Great Places" in Iowa.

"What we hope for from the Iowa Great Places distinction is that we will have the opportunity to work with state agencies that will help us continue to make this a great place," said Larson.

"We hope to build a template, a model, a successful tool, that can be used throughout the state," said Goede.

The Clay and Dickinson County group submitted one of 145 applications being considered this fall for the three pilot "Great Places" projects.

If "The Great Waters and Great Prairies of Clay and Dickinson Counties" is awarded one of Iowa's Great Places, this area will be a priority for state grants and existing funds. The three pilot areas will be named Oct. 11.

"We know that we are in one of Iowa's great places," said Richter. "We know that you too will see the great places of Clay and Dickinson counties."

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